

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to support legislation that would authorize public high schools to allow certain homeschool students to participate in school-sponsored athletic programs under clearly defined requirements.

This bill promotes fairness, inclusion, and community engagement while maintaining accountability and eligibility standards.

High school athletics are about far more than competition. They teach discipline, teamwork, resilience, leadership, and time management. These values benefit not only the individual student, but the broader school community. Homeschool students are members of our community. Their families pay taxes. They live in the same neighborhoods and contribute to the same local systems that support our public schools. Allowing them the opportunity to try out for school athletic teams, under structured and reasonable guidelines, reflects the inclusive spirit of public education.

Importantly, this bill does not create an open door without guardrails. It authorizes participation under specific circumstances and requirements, including eligibility compliance and liability coverage.

I would also like to address several common concerns:

### **Recruitment Concerns**

Some worry that allowing homeschool participation could create recruitment advantages or competitive imbalance. This legislation does not permit open enrollment or recruitment. Students would only be permitted to try out for the public high school to which they are geographically assigned. They cannot “shop” for teams. This maintains competitive fairness and prevents any recruiting advantage.

Additionally, homeschool families are not moving students in and out of public schools for athletics. These are long-term educational choices. The bill simply allows participation in extracurricular athletics — not academic enrollment.

### **Eligibility Standards**

Another concern involves academic eligibility. Homeschool students in our state are supervised either directly by the public school system or through an approved umbrella program. These students are required to remain compliant with state education regulations. If a homeschool student is compliant with the supervising authority’s requirements, that compliance should count toward athletic eligibility.

Public schools already manage eligibility verification for transfers, private school students in cooperative agreements, and other special cases. The same documentation and oversight mechanisms can be applied here.

If a homeschool student fails to meet compliance standards under their supervising entity, they would not be eligible. Accountability remains intact.

### **Liability and Insurance**

The bill also requires that certain liability insurance cover homeschool participants under the same standards applied to enrolled students. This ensures that schools are protected and that homeschool students are covered appropriately while participating in school-sponsored activities.

In many states across the country, similar policies — often called “Tim Tebow laws” — have

been implemented successfully without widespread disruption to school systems. These policies demonstrate that inclusion and integrity can coexist. Ultimately, this legislation is about opportunity — not advantage. It ensures that students who meet compliance standards, live within school boundaries, and follow the same rules as their peers have the opportunity to try out. It does not guarantee placement on a team. It simply guarantees a fair chance.

Public school athletics are community assets. Homeschool students are part of that community. When they meet the same standards, follow the same rules, and accept the same responsibilities, they should be afforded the same opportunity to participate.

I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for your time.